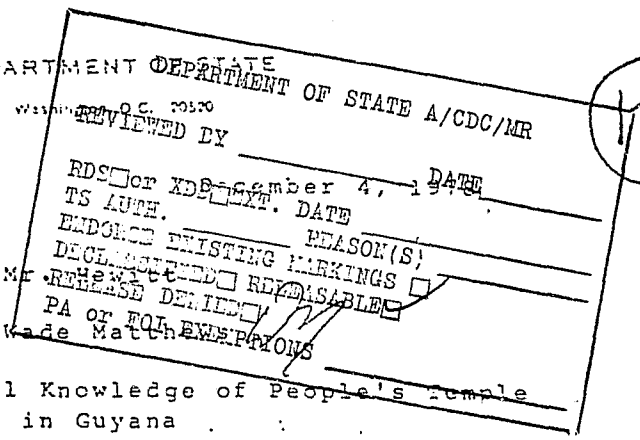
DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Washington, D.C. 20520



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UNCLASSIFIED

TO: ARA/CAR - Mr. Hewitt

FROM: ARA/CEN - Wade Matthews

SUBJECT: My Personal Knowledge of People's Temple Activities in Guyana

You requested a memorandum on any personal knowledge I might have had on People's Temple activities in Guyana. As you know, I was Deputy Chief of Mission at Georgetown, Guyana from June 1974 to July 1976.

During that time, the People's Temple mission received a land grant in the Matthews Ridge area, brought in one boat (my recollection is that it was a converted trawler, the Cudjoe) and set up the nucleus of their colony. I believe they had one or two people more or less permanently in Georgetown when I arrived, and shortly thereafter sent an advance party up to Matthews Ridge. This number increased to a total of about 60 at the Matthews Ridge colony and 2 in Georgetown by the time I left.

During the time that I was at Georgetown, I was not aware of any complaints from U.S. citizens either at the colony or in the U.S. regarding people being held against their will by the People's Temple in Georgetown. I have no recollection of any complaint on any matter from an American citizen in the U.S. regarding the People's Temple mission. There were several complaints, however, from Guyanese ministers of other religions and one U.S.C. Protestant minister in Georgetown regarding a faith healing service which the Reverend Jim Jones conducted at the Sacred Heart Roman Catholic Church. The complaints were along the line that this was supposed to be an ecumenical service, that no advance mention had been made of faith healing, and that the Roman Catholic Bishop would not have given his permission had he known that faith healing would have been a part of the service or that faith healing was a part of normal People's Temple ritual. These complaints were not directed at the Embassy, of course, but were passed to us for our information. The Guyanese ministers of religion and others making them were fully aware that the Embassy had nothing to do with arranging for this particular service, as well as that the Embassy had nothing to do (to my knowledge and recollection) with facilitating

the lease for the People's Temple mission in the Matthews Ridge area.

During much of my stay in Georgetown, the two People's Temple representatives in that city were Paula Adams and Debbie Touchette. These two women came by the Embassy on several occasions, usually to inform us of their plans for the agricultural colony, to inquire as to the identity of Guyanese officials to see regarding land leases, etc. I do not recall their requesting our assistance with the Guyanese Government, and I do not recall our extending any. I believe they had more frequent contact with our consular section regarding extension of passports and information on the proper channels in the Guyanese Government to obtain residence visas by U.S. citizen People's Temple personnel.

The consular officer during most of my stay in Georgetown was Mr. William Colwell. He might recall more about their contacts in the consular section.

Ms. Touchette and Ms. Adams conducted themselves in a normal manner and did not appear to be unduly secretive. They were businesslike, but did not eschew normal social contact. My wife informed me that they attended at least one meeting of the American Women's Group in Georgetown. I believe that the Reverend Jim Jones came by the Embassy on at least one occasion accompanied by Ms. Adams and/or Ms. Touchette, and met with Ambassador Krebs. My recollection is that he discussed their plans for the colony in general terms. If he made any specific request for U.S. Embassy assistance at that time, I do not recall Ambassador Krebs mentioning it to me.

Ambassador Krebs visited the People's Temple mission in the Matthews Ridge area on one occasion, I believe, in late 1975 or early 1976. It is possible that one of the consular officers at the Embassy may have visited it as well during that period.

My only visit to the People's Temple mission (it was not at that time called "Jonestown") was on May __ 1976. I had flown to Matthews Ridge on a working vacation of several days with my wife and three children to learn more about the area and to visit a Guyanese National Service training camp some 25 miles from the location of the People's Temple mission which was alleged to have a contingent of Cuban military personnel among the cadre. We visited the People's Temple mission for only about

45 minutes on the afternoon of May __, since the Government of Guyana driver of the Land Rover in which we were traveling could spare no more time for the stopover. My arrival at the mission was unannounced, although I had told Ms. Touchette in Georgetown a few days prior to my visit that I hoped to visit Matthews Ridge shortly and, if I did, I would try to drop by the mission. Ms. Touchette, normally stationed in Georgetown, was at the Mission when I visited (she said she had come up on business and to visit her husband), so it is possible that they were expecting me, though they would presumably have had no way of knowing the date or time of my arrival.

I found what appeared to be a frontier-type, active, new agricultural settlement with perhaps half a dozen rustic buildings and metal-roofed open-sides sheds. My recollection is that there were 100 or more acres cleared at that time with clearing proceeding on more and with various crops, notably cassava, planted and seemingly growing well. The mission had a dozen or so tractors and other pieces of mechanized agricultural equipment, the people talked as though they were enthusiastic about their work, and, from outward appearances, seemed happy enough. The group at that time was about 2/3 white and 1/3 black (I vaguely recall a couple of apparent Orientals). There were a number of children who acted normally and who accompanied my own children down to a large and well-built cage to see their chimpanzee which had been brought from California.

One thing struck me as quite unusual: When I arrived, I introduced myself to a man who exited the rustic house which appeared to be the headquarters of the Temple colony. He was followed almost immediately by Jim Jones, dressed in a shirt-jac, wearing sun glasses and accompanied by a 16 mm. movie camera grinding away as he walked over to shake my hand. A second individual stuck a mike of a tape recorder between us and the camera continued to film as we introduced ourselves and as I queried him about the mission, its crops and its personnel. He responded with apparent pride and optimism and queried me on how I thought the political situation in Guyana was going. Since we were at a point of some tension in our bilteral relations and since the camera and tape recorder continued in operation, my response was obviously relatively non-committal. Aside from the presence of the camera and recorder, the visit was friendly enough, though without any special warmth. Either Jones or one of the other

personnel showed me about the few buildings and made no attempt that I recall to restrict my movements or those of my wife and children.

I do not recall having any further contact with the People's Temple group between the date of my visit and my departure from Georgetown on transfer in late July, though Ms. Touchette or Ms. Adams could have dropped by the Embassy to see me or another officer some time during those two months.

ARA/CEN:WMatthews:cfc